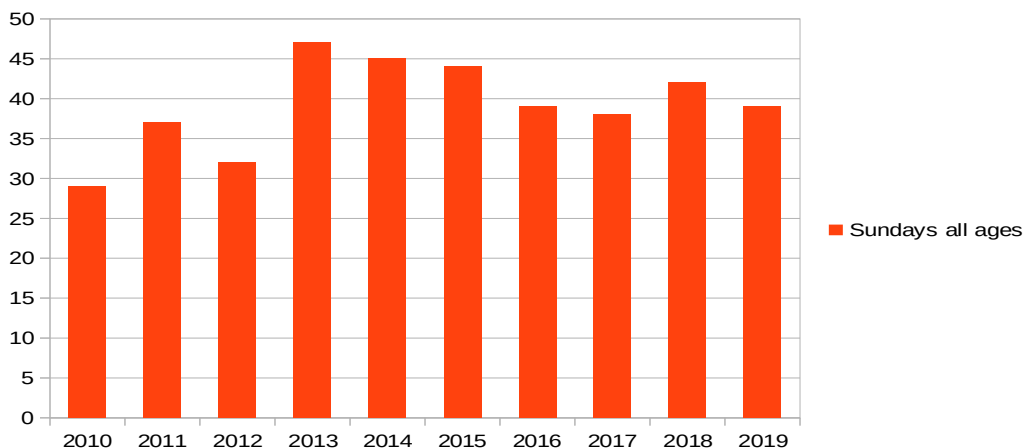


## All Saints, Hérault: Chaplain's Report for 2019



2019 was an unsettling year for those of us with ties to the United Kingdom, because of the uncertainty about membership of the EU. I have made it clear many times that I think the country has made a big mistake that it will come to regret. I say this because I think that some, although not all, of the arguments on the 'leave' side were mean-spirited and un-Christian; but now that the decision is made we must make the best of it. Let's take our cue from Paul's letter to the Philippians: 'In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.'

I'm sure that the uncertainty of Brexit has affected our little church here in the Hérault. Being members of the EU gave freedom of movement, so that it was easy for people to move to another EU country like France. Things like health care were taken care of and if it didn't work out they could just as easily move back. Many of our congregation came that way, including us. I think that the uncertainty of the last three years has meant that fewer people have come here to join us from the UK.

Having said that, our numbers have stayed pretty steady, as can be seen from the chart above. I like to think that this is because we are gradually getting to be better known in the English-speaking community, partly through better publicity but, most importantly, through 'word of mouth.' That's usually social media these days. The best way to spread the Gospel is by the sort of people we are, by the way that it's obvious that we love God and love and care for each other.

An important part of this is Safeguarding, something that gives us a lot of extra work, but

please don't underestimate its importance. We watched recently some harrowing programmes on British TV about Bishop Peter Ball, who abused young men. Even worse was the fact that the Church of England attempted to cover up his abuse and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, George Carey, behaved disgracefully. I believe that our Church has now mended its ways on this matter. But we must continue to be vigilant and to look after each other 'whether it's children or adults going through a difficult time' as it says on our notices each Sunday. It's part of our Christian duty, no less. We have been very fortunate to have Jenny Morgan overseeing this aspect of our ministry in her quiet but firm way.

As mentioned in our Annual Report, the Lent groups in 2019 were very successful, with an average of 20 people attending each of the five sessions. People wanted to continue meeting after Lent and I'm very grateful to Jim and Phyl Mallett for taking on the commitment of leading a twice per month meeting, using a video-based course and followed by a shared lunch.

This is my penultimate report as I have indicated to the Chaplaincy Council that my planned date for retiring as your Chaplain is Monday 5 April 2021, ie the day after Easter Day.

Thank you to all members of the team in our chaplaincy, especially Patricia, Nigel, Julie and the other Chaplaincy Council members. Thank you to those who have lent their homes for various meetings. Finally, thank you for your personal support to me, which I very much value.

Roger Smith  
Chaplain

January 2020